

Tai Chi Fundamentals

1. Unless specified always keep your upper body upright as if the crown of your head is suspended above and your head, shoulders and hips hung below by gravity in alignment with each other.
2. Nearly all turns and weight shifts are done from the hips or the chi, with the shoulders staying directly aligned with the hips. Never let your shoulders turn further than your hips.
3. Try to keep your body relaxed. The shoulders, elbows and hands are in relaxed positions. Never lock your elbows or knees.
4. Levels for hand positions are head high, (top of the head). Shoulder or throat high, (the plane from shoulder to throat to shoulder). Heart high. Hip high. Thigh high.
5. The circle, (Woo Chi), or half circle positions are made as if you had your arms wrapped around a large tree with your fingertips touching. The half circle is with one arm only.
6. Weight shifts are 100% one leg, 50/50% between your legs or 70/30% between your legs.
7. Foot or arm angles are 90°, (right angle), or 45°.
8. The stance or width between your feet is either a wide step, meaning at shoulder width between your feet or a shallow step which means the heels are in line.
9. The claw is form by making a hook with right hand pointing fingers down with the fingers lightly touching each other. It is always associated with the right arm in a half circle, 45° from the shoulder, with the elbow high.
10. 'On Guard' is either the right or left hand pulled up in front of the shoulder on edge elbow down and close to the rib cage.
11. 'Cradle the Baby' is either hand 'On Guard' with the other forearm parallel to the ground, with the fingers touching the inside of the 'On Guard' elbow, palm up.
12. A large ball is one hand, palm down at the shoulder and the other hand palm up at the same side hip.
13. The small ball is hands facing each other in front of the heart, left fingers pointing up and right fingers pointing left.
14. The box shape is shoulder width on the outside of your feet and the insides of your feet are parallel to each other.
15. Focus should be on breathing deeply and trying to coordinate it with your movement.
16. Tai Chi requires practice with a focus on the details of body alignment and weight shifts. Following all the steps will take time so be patient with yourself.